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- least a mother can do is to master one such little book of easy & pleasant reading upon whatever new subject of study her children may take up: her mature thought & mother-wit will do the rest, & enable her to follow their studies with interest & intelligence: as for 'current thought' & discovery, the newspapers will keep her up in these."

"All this sounds possible; what further suggestions would you make to this aspiring mother?"

"Do not be alarmed - she should pursue a fixed 'Method of Education.'"

"Is that advisable? Children brought up on a 'system' are apt to have little old fashioned airs of superiority, & to behave as if horns influence shut out all other teaching. Besides, the homes in which the mother says, with an air, 'I always' do so & so 'with any children,' are rather stiff & ungenial. Children are creative little beings, & any attempt to reduce themselves & their ways to a set-formula makes them dull & spiritless; or, supposing their energies find hidden vent, they lose the frankness which is a child's safeguarded charm."

"We are hardly speaking of the same thing; to make what I mean by Method clear, let me read a passage which has struck me from Mr. Coleridge's valuable essay on the subject. He is speaking of Methods of generally, without reference to Education: -

"The word METHOD being of Grecian origin, fixed formed & applied by that acute, ingenious,

and accurate people, to the purposes of scientific arrangement, it is in the Greek language that we must seek for its primary & fundamental signification. Now, in Greek, it literally means a way, or path, of transit. Hence the first idea of Method is a progressive transition from one step in any course to another; . . . it necessarily implies a Principle of UNITY WITH PROGRESSION.

All things, in us, & about us, are a Chaos, without Method: as long as the mind is entirely passive, so long as there is an habitual submission of the Understanding to mere events & images, as such, without any attempt to classify & arrange them, so long the Chaos must continue. There may be transitions, but there cannot be progress; there may be sensation, but there cannot be thought: for the total absence of Method renders thinking impracticable; ^{as} we find that partial defects of method proportionably render thinking a trouble & fatigues?

"It is not solely in the formation of the Human Understanding, and in the construction of Science & Literature that the employment of Method is indispensably necessary; but its importance is equally felt, & equally acknowledged, in the whole business & economy of active & domestic life. From the cottage's hearth to the workshop of the artisan

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Let us take one more late an example which
must come home to every man's business
& bosom. Is there not a Method in the
discharge of all our relative duties? and is not
he the truly virtuous & happy man, who
seizing first and laying hold most firmly
of the great First Truth, is guided by that
divine light through all the meandering
& stormy courses of his existence? & by
him every relation of life affords a prolific
Idea of duty; by pursuing which into all
its practical consequences, he becomes
a good servant or a good master, a good
subject or a good sovereign, a good son
or a good father, a good friend, a good
patriot, a good Christian, a good man!!

Thus, considered generally, we ~~cannot fail~~
to see that method implies the contemplation
of a desirable end, a full purpose to reach that
end, & a careful choosing & steadily following
up of means, the necessary steps towards
the end. No one succeeds in the
practical business of life without this
kind of method, & the chief element
of a man's success is the purpose
that is in view: according to that
purpose he it done unto thee, appears to
me a fair reading of the divine dealings
with man. That I complain of is, that
while all other important affairs are transacted
with

Method. Education alone is carried on in a haphazard, desultory way. Partly out of idleness, partly because they perceive the working of higher wisdom than their own in the development of their children, people rarely form such a "prolific Idea" of Education as should lead to steady noble efforts & beautiful results. Aim high: ~~all things are possible to him that believeth; and, at the most~~
"We aim at a star"

Shoots higher far than he that means a tree.
"I see the advantage of a steady definite aim in practical matters; a young man without purpose is a popeless charge to his friends. So, too, are the young women to whom one longs to say, 'Do something do it, do it, do it!' - ~~though the purpose of a man only tends to small ends in a general way~~ Still I hardly see that purpose can effect an education beyond the ordinary aim - that one's own children should know that their children know & should behave as well as their children behave."

"Consider for a moment; you have always purposed that your children should speak the truth, should love each other, should be helpful & gentle to poor people; in these ways they are perfect. You will say it is only as bears & lions would fight - it is their nature to - but with
other

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other training, nature would have developed
the tendency. The truth is, your mind
has been steadily bent on these ends, and,
without making much fuss ^{ado} about the
matter, by a word here, a look there, a little
judicious repression or encouragement,
you have brought about all you had set
your heart on. Surely, purpose is power;
almost irresistible power. Think of the
Mother of the Weavep taking her children
to her own room, each in his turn, with
the intention that they should learn to
read in a fortnight; and, in a fortnight,
though he did not know his letters to begin
with, each of them could read the Bible with
ease: what years of idle drudgery were they
saved! If the purpose & steady effort
by means of which the children are trained
to perform the show feats of a circus were
spent upon real education, on all round
development, conceive the result! "I
begin to see what you mean by 'all round
development'; a parent, having first formed
an ideal of what a human being ought to be,
should take steady, progressive steps toward
producing this ideal in his own child, not
in one or two directions, but all round,
in speech, mind, & behaviour, in thought, feeling,
faith, even in physique. To think of children
in this way takes away one's breath; it is
like looking at the stars in the company of

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an astronomer. Some such idea of a parent's
duty has come to me from time to time; but,
even if the lines were plainer & easier,
should we not take too much upon ourselves
by following them? Perhaps the great
possibilities that lie within our children
affect ^{parents, now,} ~~us~~ in another way; do you not
think we are failing in reverence for the young?
Yes; but it is too often a superstitious reverence
which tends to obscure the conception of parent's
duty; the children are gods in many
homes, with a sort of divine right to do as
they like. Do you remember the story in
'French Home Life', of the father & mother who
appeared late at a dinner party, & excused
themselves by saying that their little daughter
of three had required them to undress &
go to bed when she died, & that they had not
been able to steal off until the child had
fallen asleep? ~~in an extraordinary illustration~~
idea that

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What an unnatural system! says a mother.
Whatever faults children may have now, they do not
do everything for effect; they are at least spontaneous
~~what~~ ^{no quality} ~~is~~ ^{as this} so charming in a child. Well, accepting
to the children their own prophets, I suppose it
must be admitted ^{conceded} that the dear presentations
were not quite natural in company! They took
civil pains to turn the best side out; did not
tell in each other's presence nor ^{public} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~one~~
another's presence, ^{no allow conversation to differ because} ~~in~~
also to ^{must be to} ~~showing~~ ^{they were too easy to} ~~showing~~
it may not be a bad thing to turn the best side
out; ^{that is qualities} ~~good~~ ^{develop} in the even ~~each~~ ^{each} ~~3~~
~~there is no sense~~ ~~any of meeting a child~~
~~altogether best side!~~ ~~then to have~~ ^{a child} ~~always~~
~~show~~ ^{show} his best side ~~only~~ and in his heavy
mouths to show! If human beings were perfect
they might be allowed to grow up spontaneous
in ~~the~~ ^{but this is} ~~might~~ ^{be} ~~admired~~ ^{admired} but being ~~as we are~~ ^{as we are} ~~the~~
~~in the~~ ^{there} ~~is~~ ^{no basis to please others}

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"Yes; one hopes few parents, French or English,
would be so weak?"

"The story is, no doubt; an extravagant illustration
of what appears to be a growing idea, that the
amiable parent ought rather to gratify &
appreciate than to control & educate his
child. But surely it is a mistake ^{thus} to
worship our children as they are. Let us
have a high ideal by all means, but less
of the present, than of the possible child; let us
add every gracious lineament to the outline,
drawing from poetic thought, & from the
stories of noble lives. But let this high
ideal be regarded as an end to be
laboured for, & then it is astonishing
how an exalted standard becomes a
means of education to parent as well
as to child."

"I can believe that a woman, fully inspired
with a sense of what her children should
be,

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may become, almost unconsciously, all that a mother ought to be; but I hardly see even how to get this ideal in any practical way: beautiful & desirable, but too vague & misty to suggest a 'Method of Education'; it floats before me. What I want to know is, what to do, & towards what immediate end."

"Education, like other sciences, must be studied in detail, & a vague notion is, I suppose, all that may be taken in at a single glance. The ideal, & the Method, the way to it, become manifest only as we take 'human nature' to pieces; consider what goes to make up a man. What every part of him is capable of, & that several laws every part of him is in subjection, & how each faculty may be assisted to its due development. A merely empirical system of education, taken up at second-hand, & pursued without intelligence, can only be expected to produce mechanical results, but the labour of conceiving a true Method is rewarded in an extraordinary way; indeed the results aimed at often appear to arrive without effort."